

## Schools Reconnect Update

We are pleased to inform you of some exciting opportunities being made available to children and young people in Kent by businesses and community organisations who are working with us to make Reconnect a success. These include:

- Free travel on buses
- Free learning opportunities
- Discounted leisure centre offer
- Locality events

To help you see quickly where we need you to take some immediate action, we have used green font to highlight these requests. We are grateful for your help.

Some offers are/will be available free or at discounted prices to those on benefits related free school meals. For this to work, the providers need a mechanism to determine eligibility for this concession. As neither you, nor we, have time to keep checking eligibility and informing providers, we are working with Wonde to produce and distribute an electronic Reconnect Discount Voucher. Most families in Kent who receive benefits related FSMs are now familiar with the mechanism Wonde uses to distribute supermarket vouchers, and this would be similar. **I would be grateful if you would send the message found via [this link](#) to your FSM families so they are aware that they will be receiving this, and its purpose.** If your school is one of the very few not using Wonde for FSM voucher distribution, please contact [reconnect.kentcyp@kent.gov.uk](mailto:reconnect.kentcyp@kent.gov.uk).

### Free Bus Travel

We are also pleased to inform you that our local bus companies have agreed a summer travel offer. All pupils in years 6 to 13 will be able to travel free on buses in Kent. All children and young people will receive a physical bus pass, **which we will need you to distribute before the end of term please.** Bus passes will be with you via the “blue bag” shortly.

### Leisure Centre Offer

The majority of leisure centres across Kent have united behind Reconnect and agreed to have a summer membership offer for children and young people. All are offering a 6-week membership pass for £25 per child, discounted by Reconnect to £10 for those on benefits related free school meals. Families on FSM will be able to use the Reconnect Discount Voucher with their chosen participating leisure centre to access this offer.

Depending on location, some leisure centres will be working with neighbouring centres to enable children and young people to use their membership in more than one centre, to enable the widest access of facilities and activities, but also in recognition that they may want to join friends who live nearer to different centres to their own local facility.

The list of participating centres is being finalised and will be shared on our website over the next few days.

### Free Summer Learning Opportunities

#### Lyfta

We're delighted to announce that we are working with Lyfta to provide an exciting series of immersive learning experiences for pupils over the summer. Lyfta is an innovative, award winning resource. It invites students to explore and connect with positive human stories from around the world through breath-taking immersive experiences and interactive online

environments. It models resilience, problem-solving, teamwork, and many other critical skills, values and competencies.

All schools in Kent are entitled to access Lyfta's summer learning programme, *Reconnect through Connection*, which will include immersive virtual learning journeys to six exciting places around the world. Students will be able to access their Lyfta learning journeys throughout the summer holidays using a computer or iPad. Lyfta also provides fully resourced lessons that can be delivered by teachers during summer schools. It also offers engaging independent learning opportunities for children and young people to explore by themselves.

To access the platform for your students or to support summer school lessons, please visit [lyfta.com/reconnect](https://lyfta.com/reconnect) and fill out the form to register your interest. To find out more, watch the short video clip on the webpage. Live webinars or recorded information to support access will be offered to all who register interest.

### Sir Linkalot

Sir Linkalot is an award-winning app that helps children of all ages spell any tricky word, all the way from 'was' to 'onomatopoeia' and is a gamechanger for those with dyslexia. To find out more, take a look at this [short video clip](#) of teachers explaining why Sir Linkalot is a valued teaching resource.

Access to the app is free for all Kent schools and parents to access until 1 November 2021. To log into the app, please follow the instructions below:

- Download the app from the app store by searching 'Sir Linkalot Spelling'.
- Once it has downloaded, open the app, go through the welcome instructions and then click on the three dots in the top right-hand corner.
- Click 'log in' and then select 'Have an access code?' from the login page.
- The **username is KCC-SL-S** and the **password code is A9Y5TWC6**.

To log into the web browser version, please follow the instructions below:

- Visit [app.sirlinkalot.org](https://app.sirlinkalot.org).
- On the main web page click on the log symbol in the top right-hand corner.
- Enter the log in details listed above and sign in.

**Please note**, there is a different access code for parents: **KCC-SL-P**. This is included in the parents/carers leaflet that you will be able to access through the schools webpage to forward on to parents/carers.

If you would like to find out more or need any support, Andy Salmon (Sir Linkalot) will be running four Zoom demonstrations at 4pm on 8, 12, 15 and 19 July. The link to access these is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEqduyrrzIqG9e9baeKG3n9DI8wTMNvjpM4>. Please forward on to members of staff or others who may be interested in attending. If you are unable to attend these live sessions, then Andy has also provided an in-depth [demonstration video](#).

### Kent Children's University

50 % discount for all Kent families and children to join Kent Children's University, funded by Reconnect.

Children's University is all about developing practical and personal skills, building confidence, and discovering new interests and talents beyond the classroom. Participating

families can use Children's University Online to search for fun and enjoyable learning activities that their child can take part in outside normal school time. Activities range from trips to tourist destinations, music lessons, sessions in sports clubs, learning a language and much, much more. Families can also access a range of free or low-cost materials to complete at home, such as a number of seasonal Children's University Challenges. These activities accrue Learning Credits in a child's Passport to Learning.

Children who participate in Children's University can learn in a rich range of contexts, at home or further afield, experience new places, visit universities and attend their own graduation ceremonies. This adventure introduces children to the joy of learning, brings a sense of wonder in the world around them and develops their confidence and aspirations for the brightest futures.

To find out more please visit our [website](#) or email [kcu@theeducationpeople.org](mailto:kcu@theeducationpeople.org) if you have any questions.

### **Summer Reading Challenge**

Kent Libraries would like to introduce Wild World Heroes, Summer Reading Challenge 2021, a celebration of nature and action for the environment, in partnership with WWF UK. Running from 10 July – 11 September 2021, this year's Summer Reading Challenge celebrates adventure, friendship, reading and fun while helping children to explore nature and discover how important it is. The challenge involves reading six library books over the summer period, and once completed, children will receive a medal and a certificate (whilst stocks last). And it's all free!

With the help and funding from the Reconnect Programme, Kent Libraries are able to offer Kent families additional interactive virtual events and exciting resources, encouraging more children to get involved. There will be activities and events throughout the Summer on the [Kent Libraries Facebook](#) page and YouTube channel, where there will be loads of nature-themed, fun ideas for taking care of the environment.

### **Playground**

Playground is an exciting, free, creative programme for very young children and their families, happening in libraries and early years settings throughout Kent over the next year. Families will be immersed in creative activity that is deeply engaging, transformative and of the highest quality. The Playground experience will begin at a number of free events across the summer, with a full programme being announced very soon. These events will serve as an introduction to the main programme of weekly sessions that will start in Autumn 2021. More details to follow.

### **Other Reconnect Offers**

We have worked with Headstart Kent to increase the support available to children and young people via:

#### **Talents and Interests**

The Kent Talents and Interests grant scheme is now open to all children and young people aged 5 – 19 inclusive in Kent.

A trusted adult from school or community organisations can apply on a child or young person's behalf to access hobbies or interests. This includes clubs, groups, equipment and

transport. Up to £300 is available for an individual child or young person, and up to £1000 is available for groups. [Talents and Interests grant scheme - Kent County Council](#)

### **Young Life's Foundation (YLF)**

Young Life's Foundation Volunteer Mentoring deliver an adult volunteer mentoring programme. A trusted relationship is built with young people aged 10-16 to explore and improve their emotional health and well-being and build their resilience. A volunteer Mentor is a positive role model, who is there to guide and advise, striving to meet set goals to help young people achieve their potential.

To contact YLF about referrals, visit the website: <https://yjf.org.uk/how-we-help/mentoring/>, click 'Our Services', then 'Mentoring' section.

### **Salus – HeadStart Kent Intensive Mentoring**

Salus are able to offer an Intensive Mentoring Service to children and young people across Kent. The aim of the programme is to improve the emotional well-being and resilience of children and young people, aged 10-16, who are experiencing adversity. Salus adopts a strengths-based approach for supporting children, young people and their families. The highly skilled mentors use a range of evidence-based approaches to understand need and implement robust plans for support.

If you would like more information, including the referral process please visit <https://salusgroup.org.uk/service/headstart-kent/>. Please note referrals will be open from mid-August, but if you have any young people who would benefit from earlier support, please contact [info@salusgroup.org.uk](mailto:info@salusgroup.org.uk).

### **Resilience Awards for Young People**

Co-produced with young people from Kent Youth Voice, these awards recognise young people's achievements, including learning new skills, kindness, supporting mental health and wellbeing and school readiness. Young people can apply themselves and provide evidence of their own achievements. Following the successful initial uptake, this project has now been included in the countywide Reconnect programme. The resilience awards can be found [here](#).

### **Pride Event – 4<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

A 'Pride' event for young people (aged 13-17) is to be held in Kent. The 'BeYou Pride Day' is a chance for younger members of Kent's LGBT+ community to come together, celebrate who they are and have fun. It will take place in an outdoor venue (location to be confirmed) on Saturday 4 September. There will be guest speakers, games, sports, drag workshops, food stands, chances to learn about support available to LGBT+ young people and more.

The event is run by The BeYou Project (part of the charity Porchlight) which provides safe spaces and support for LGBT+ young people in Kent. For more information and updates visit [beyou@porchlight.org.uk](mailto:beyou@porchlight.org.uk), and to learn more about The BeYou Project's work visit [thebeyouproject.co.uk](http://thebeyouproject.co.uk).

### **Free Virtual ½ Day Youth Mental Health First Aid Training**

Funded through HeadStart Kent for [parents/carers](#) across the county. This introductory MHFA session aims to raise awareness of young people's mental health. It covers:

- Some of the common mental health issues affecting young people, including depression, anxiety, eating disorders and psychosis.
- Skills to work more effectively with young people living with mental health issues.
- Ways to support young people with a mental health issue and relate to their experiences.

These courses are free for parents to attend and are funded specifically with the idea that parents and carers access them to raise awareness of how they can support young people.

All sessions will be delivered via virtual conferencing platform ZOOM. To book a space on any of the courses we currently have available, please visit: [Virtual Half-Day MHFA Courses | MHFA Training Kent \(maidstonemind.org\)](https://www.maidstonemind.org/virtual-half-day-mhfa-courses)

Below are some of the upcoming dates:

- Friday 23rd July 2021 | 10am to 1pm
- Monday 9th August 2021 | 10am to 1pm
- Tuesday 31st August 2021 | 10am to 1pm

There are dates currently available through to Spring 2022, so for dates beyond the summer, please visit the website using the link above.

### **Imago Family Fun Days**

We have commissioned Imago/Kent Young Carers to deliver family fun days for young carers and their families. Events will take place in all districts across Kent over the summer holidays. **If you need any further information, or wish to register as a Young Carer, please contact our hub on 0300 111 1110 or [youngcarers@imago.community](mailto:youngcarers@imago.community).**

### **Imago Reintegration to Education**

Young carers have faced additional challenges during this time, so we are funding Imago to support young carers who need help with getting back into school and education. Imago aim to work with young carers and their families as well as with schools, to meet the needs of the young carers and help to build positive and lasting relationships within education. **If you need any further information, or wish to register as a Young Carer, please contact our hub on 0300 111 1110 or [youngcarers@imago.community](mailto:youngcarers@imago.community).**

### **Open Access Targeted Summer Events**

Open Access will be running small family events within community spaces that will be delivered over four weeks in school holidays to reach targeted children and families. The events will be in line with the ethos of Reconnect with a focus on engaging targeted communities connecting young people and families to what's on offer in their local community.

Two events per district for four weeks of summer holidays from Monday 26 July to Friday 20 August 2021

- The events will be held in identified LSOAs (those with the highest levels of deprivation) within districts making use of community areas including greens, parks, community sites with outside space, that are easily accessible to targeted families.
- Events will be aimed at whole families, recognising that many activities will be more suitable for babies and children up to primary school and early secondary years, activities will be inclusive of older children/teenagers and staff will be available to support and engage all that attend.

- The events will be jointly organised and led by each OA district service (Youth and Children's Centres).
- Each event will aim to have a marketplace encouraging participation from relevant local partner agencies. This will be subject to space, availability and local priorities.
- All events will adhere to latest Covid guidance and relevant Risk Assessments.

Schools in these areas will be contacted by Open Access staff with the ask of talking to relevant families who may benefit from attendance at one of these events. Due to numbers, it is not possible to advertise to whole schools and the request is to target the families who we feel would benefit. For further information please contact your local Open Access team [here](#) for information on local services for children over the summer.

## Reconnect Communication

We are aware there is a lot of information in this communication as we try to ensure you have everything you need to support your families to access the opportunities provided by Reconnect. We have created a [designated webpage](#) for professionals to access details about all Reconnect opportunities. This includes a section which **will contain leaflets next week ready to send out directly from yourselves to parents and young people**, and a section about resources that can be used to support summer schools you may be providing. Lots of information will be added to this page over the next few days and into next week, so we recommend bookmarking this page in your internet browser and keep checking back for updates.

We have also created a [Reconnect Facebook](#) page. We will include details in the parents leaflet, but **please share this link on your Facebook page** so the school community can access further information about Reconnect activities throughout the summer.

Our [Reconnect: Kent children and young people - Kent County Council](#) website has been revamped. It now contains details of the opportunities available through Reconnect, together with the route in for those wanting to add to that offer, volunteer or donate. The information is constantly updated as more opportunities and activities become known to us. **Please ensure staff are aware of the site and of Reconnect.** Again we will have the website link in our parents leaflet.

## Call for help with venues

We have been contacted by a number of organisations who are planning to run summer activities for children and young people as part of the Reconnect programme but are struggling to access local venues. Some community venues remain closed because of Covid restrictions and others are being used for Covid testing and vaccinations so there is a lack of provision for community groups to access.

**Could you please email us using [reconnect.kentcyp@kent.gov.uk](mailto:reconnect.kentcyp@kent.gov.uk) if you think you may be able to offer access to school premises for community groups or clubs. Please include:**

- Whether there is indoor or outdoor space (or both)
- Capacity of the venue if known (both under normal circumstances and under Covid restrictions)
- Address of the venue
- Contact name, email address and number for enquiries
- General availability.